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difficulty. The original owner could not be held responsible for the collapse of the town-site bubble. Numerous other speculations of like character fell through about the same time. The losers, as a rule, realized their past folly, and held their peace.

One perfect day in Spring, two years later, the elder Chesley was seated where he was when this narrative opened, except that the old ranch house had given place to the best of the dwellings constructed at Hustleton during the boom. He occupied an easy chair on the veranda, and was smoking his favorite pipe. The majestic mountains, lifting their snowy tops into the deep blue of the sky, were as he had always known them, but nearly all else in sight was changed. The thousands of town-lot stakes had long since been plowed under, and the hills once bare were now hidden by young orchards and vineyards, which covered all the slopes with their green luxuriance. His own home was surrounded by thousands of flourishing young orange trees, for George had deserted Blackstone to indulge his fondness for practical horticulture.

Mrs. Chesley came out of the house with an open letter in her hand.

"Here is good news," she said, "Kate and Arthur will spend the summer with us, and little Robert is quite well."

"That is good," the Colonel responded, well pleased.

She paused a moment beside him, and with a hand upon his shoulder, said,—

"We are happier here than we were in the city, don't you think so, Robert?"

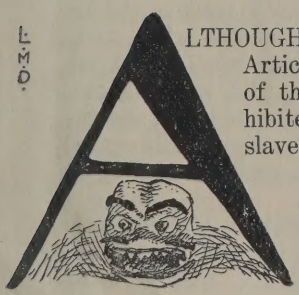
"Yes, mother," he answered, looking up with the old tranquil air of deep content. "I hope we shall never move again, and that there will never be another boom."

[THE END]

WAG BENTON, THE BLACK-BIRDER

A TALE OF AFRICAN SLAVE STEALING

BY W. F. OLIVER, M. D.



ALTHOUGH Clause 1, Section 9, Article 1, of the Constitution of the United States prohibited the importation of slaves after the year 1808, yet the profits of the African slave trade were so great that the law was frequently and flagrantly violated. This led Congress to enact a law in 1820 making slave smuggling piracy, and punishable by death,—which extreme penalty did not deter the venturous marine marauder from hazarding his head for the sake of his nefarious business. Many of these buccaneers had men who stood in high social and political places for their patrons, and hunted their human game with a recklessness that was emboldened by a powerful reserve force.

The leading nations of Europe had also declared against the slave trade, and in concert with the United States had offered a tempting reward for every slave and slave-robber that was captured. Thus set the navies of those nations to keeping a sharp lookout for slavers, for the sake of both prize-money and exciting adventure.

A certain high officer in the United States Navy had a venturous brother-in-law who was the leader of a gang of black-birders, as the slave thieves were called, and very adroitly used his authority to protect and prosper the audacious freebooters, with an open pocket for a share of the ill-earned profits.

The leading spirit of the expedition was

Wag Benton, who was sought after for his special qualifications as an expert adventurer. He began his dubious career as a sailor in the United States Navy during the Mexican War of 1846. His appetite for adventure increased with each hazard, and he joined the Walker filibustering expedition to Honduras. After Walker's discomfiture at Leon, his few followers who escaped death or capture were vigilantly hunted for by Honduras spies. Wag Benton was of the few who eluded them, and he only escaped by "holding up" a New York coffee merchant, robbing him of his money and passport, and then pushing boldly across the country to the Caribbean coast and sailing for New Orleans.

He was just the man that his old naval shipmate, Captain Rexton, was looking for to act as super-cargo of his slaver, which he was fitting out under the name of the Trafican, and the guise of a trading ship for South Africa. An armament of eight cannon and a hundred stand of arms was smuggled on board in bales of goods, and a hundred reckless men were sneaked on board and stowed away. The Trafican then, with a stuffed cargo of trading goods, a crew of twenty men, and regular clearance papers for South African ports, let go her cables and steamed away for the slave fields of the Congo river. The Captain had also a set of false clearance papers for the Congo river, which a treacherous clerk in the custom house had forged, to display to any inquisitive man-of-war that might be patrolling the track of the Congo slavers. The clerk had an interest in the enterprise.

As was expected, a United States cruiser was lying at the mouth of the river, but it had the rather cumbrous company of a Spanish cruiser and a French corvette. The Captain of the Trafican, having paid his respects to his brother-in-law and partner on board of the cruiser, proceeded up the river, and began trading with the long-shore natives for their prisoners of war, at the ratio of a red handkerchief for a five hundred dollar negro. At the same time Wag Benton at the head of a company of black-birders was out netting the dusky prey in its native rookery.

It was the intention of the buccaneers to purchase all of their contraband cargo, and not attempt to make any captures themselves, but the supply of prisoners was limited to about two hundred men, it being a time of comparative peace between the Congo tribes. They did not have time to wait for a renewal of hostilities and take the chances of the merchant warriors securing the necessary merchandise, and so it was decided to attempt a stratagem for the capture of an entire village.

The Captain set out with a party of thirty men for the enemy's country. Each man was armed with a brace of concealed pistols, and supplied with a pack of trinkets. This was called the "baiting brigade." They marched boldly toward the "black-birds' roosts."

Wag Benton with seventy well armed men, known as the "cagers," sneaked along a day's march behind. They traveled only at night, and camped in the jungle without fires during daylight. So cautiously did they proceed that their presence in the country was not discovered until the unwary birds found themselves in a cage of armed men.

On the afternoon of the sixth day's journey, the Congo guide pointed out a village of his enemy, containing about eight hundren inhabitants, and then went back to inform Wag Benton's party. The chief of the village led his army out to meet the unexpected visitors, but finding that their attitude was friendly, escorted them back to the village, laid weapons aside, and began to barter their ivory, dye stuffs, and skins, for the flashy trinkets of the slave traders. Business was so brisk that it did not stop for night, but continued by the light of the huge fires until the stock in trade of the natives was in the hands of the white men. Then the glittering beads were displayed, which set the negroes wild with delight. They had nothing left now to trade, and the merchants, feigning reluctance,finally agreed to accept arrows and spear heads, which were urged upon them.

It was at the darkest hour that just precedes daylight, when the last arrow and spear head were securely packed away among the merchants' goods, that the cagers, having cautiously surrounded the village and crept behind the out-skirting huts, fired off their guns into the air, and rushed forward with a fiendish yell upon the astonished natives. The warriors, remembering that they had sold their weapons, ran toward the traders' stand to recover them, only to be met with a volley of blank cartridges from

their pistols. The terrorized negroes turned to flee, but the bristling bayonets of the cagers turned them back upon the baiting brigade, to receive another harmless volley which utterly demoralized them. Tumbling over each other in their confusion made them think that they were being slaughtered, and being hemmed in on all sides by fire and steel, there was nothing for them to do but to prostrate themselves upon the ground as a token of submission. They were quickly hand-cuffed in pairs to a long chain, and at once started for the ship.

It was a surprising fact that during all of the confusion and recklessness, no one was hurt, excepting a few children who were run over. It was more remarkable still that not a single native escaped.

It was a sorrowful sight to see those inoffensive creatures suddenly snatched from perhaps life's happiest condition, the primitive state that is limited in knowledge, wants, and hope, to be chained together for days under the burdens of their captors; to suffocate or rot in the contagious hold of the slave ship; or to be driven to a living death under the lash of the slave driver.

It was a heartrending scene to see a mother trying to carry her infant all day upon one arm, for the manacled hand was of no use, and the wrist was often chafed or bleeding, until completely exhausted, she let it fall by the wayside, to perish from hunger or be destroyed by wild beasts. It is cruelty to animals to keep them harnessed together for a longer time than a day. Yet these brutal black-birders had no thought of humanity while keeping eight hundred men, women, and children, locked to a chain for more than a week. Eating, sleeping, or marching, they were never for a moment released, until they were unshackled on board of the ship, to endure a worse imprisonment in the filthy hold.

The Trafican, having on board also the slaves that had been purchased, dropped down the river and came to anchor a few miles above its mouth. A boat was sent at night to notify the captain of the United States cruiser. That artful officer had issued a challenge to the other men-of-war to join his crew in a prize drill in their boats as soon as he could overhaul and repair his, which pretended task came to a sudden end when the Trafican was reported as ready to sail. The captain of the American ship notified the other ships that he would be ready for their aquatic tournament the same afternoon that the slave ship proposed to escape from the river. At one o'clock he left his moorings, and followed by the Frenchman and the Spaniard, led the way to a quiet bay out of sight of the mouth of the river. The slaver then got under way and sailed for Cuba; but not, however, adroitly enough to avoid the suspicious Spaniard, which was hanging on the outer limits of the bay. The Spanish captain at once signaled his boats to return to the ship and gave chase.

The American captain well knew the cause of the Spaniard's sudden withdrawal from the contest, and as he dared not explain to the Frenchman, nor could frame any plausible excuse for abandoning the tournament, he instructed his men to allow the Frenchmen to win easily, in order to shorten the sport. The American guardian was anxious to follow, and if possible, protect his illegitimate ward, by capturing her himself, if necessary to keep her out of the hands of the Spaniards. It was almost dark when the ships reached their anchorage at the river, and the curious Frenchman was very much concerned as to the whereabouts of the Spaniard. The American captain was just suggesting that she might have gone up the river for fresh water, when a shot was heard out at sea. Without exchanging another word, both ships slipped their cables and started at full speed in the direction of the sound. A four tandem sea race then stretched across the Atlantic course, with the slaver and the Spaniard far in the lead, and the American ahead of the Frenchman by an eighth of a knot.

When the Trafican saw that she was being chased, port holes were cut and covered with cloth the color of her hull and the guns mounted. The crew was piped for grog and all things made ready for action. Just before dark the Spaniard came near enough to throw a shot across the Trafican's bow. This failing to stop the slaver, another was sent a little nearer, without effect. It was only after a chain shot had crashed through the rigging that the slave ship rounded to and ran along-side of the Spaniard, as if to surrender without a parley. The Spanish sailors were congratulating themselves upon their easy prize, and getting their grappling hooks ready to make

fast to it, when four shotted cannon thrust their muzzles through the side of the Trafican, and poured a broadside into the astonished Spaniards. Scarcely had the guns recoiled when a hundred men rose from behind the slaver's bulwarks, and cleared the Spanish deck with "buck and ball." The Trafican disappeared in the falling darkness. An hour later the American and French ships found the Spanish ship a drifting morgue and hospital, with a hundred dead and wounded on board.

The American captain sent his surgeons to help care for the wounded men, and his engineers to help repair the damaged machinery.

After two days both ships got under way toward the West Indies, the destination of the slaver as one supposed and the other knew. The excited Frenchman had sailed away on the wrong track, the northwest, as soon as he knew that the Trafican was a slave ship. This gave Captain Rexton no uneasiness, for it was understood that in case the slaver was discovered she would head for the southwest as soon as darkness concealed the movements. At daylight the Trafican drew her fires and spread her sails, for the smoke of a steamer can be seen farther at sea than a sail. Steam was raised at night and canvas in the morning, and thus the alternating wheel and sail carried her unobserved to the latitude of Montevideo.

In prolonging the voyage to escape capture they had incurred a horrible calamity. Smallpox broke out among the natives crowded into the noxious hold, and raged in its most virulent form. The crew was contaminated, and the bodies of twenty white men, and over four hundred negroes were thrown into the sea. There was no escaping from the terrible situation. The contagion pervaded the entire ship, and poisoned the air with its loathsome infection. The dare-devil black-birders, who had never faltered before any visible enemy, now surrendered to this insidious foe, and awaited their melancholy fate with the fortitude of heroes of a noble cause.

Wag Benton, who had been sick-bay steward in the Navy, and a half dozen others who had had smallpox, were the only persons who would venture below decks during the six weeks that the pestilence raged. Nor did it cease its ravages until its fires went out because there was no more fuel left.

When enough of the crew had recovered sufficiently to man the ship, she turned her prow toward the West Indies, and cautiously proceeded upon her perilous way. The guns had been dismounted, the port-holes mended, the rigging changed, and the hull painted another color, hoping by this means to delude the revengeful Spaniard, in passing as a merchantman. She was no longer in condition to "fight and run away." She must surrender without a powder and ball protest if again overhauled.

The masquerading slaver threaded the Windward islands during the night, passed well north of the Leeward group, kept out of sight of Jamaica, and would have had her contraband cargo safely in the hands of the slave-dealers at Matanzas, before another morning, had she not grounded upon a reef near the Isle of the Pines at falling tide, where daylight found her, stuck fast, but in no way damaged by the shock.

The Americans had kept close company with the Spaniard, hoping to divert her from the expected route of the slaver, or in case of a discovery, to capture her rather than have their friends fall into the hands of the revengeful Spaniards. It would not be a very risky piece of carelessness to allow the black-birders to escape, and their share of the prize money for the slaves and ship would to some small extent repay the men who had risked their lives in the hazardous business if they ever could be found. The vigilance with which the Spanish ship patrolled the southern coast of Cuba annoyed the American captain, and made him keep all the closer to his malignant companion at sea. He had agreed with Captain Rexton that he would always display his lights in a certain unusual arrangement, so that when sighted he would not lack a friend, nor fear an enemy. The Spaniards protested against showing any lights at all, justly claiming that they were only danger signals to the black-birders. The American cited his Naval regulations and trimmed his lamps anew. The Spaniard never displayed a light while upon a slaver cruise, but gave close attention to spark arresters. The Trafican was equally economical with her oil.

When the slaver had stopped the useless reversal of her wheel in her struggle to get afloat, the welcome constellation of friendly

lights came coasting around the island. A half dozen knots away it cast anchor, for it was the American guardian at hand at an opportune hour. The ill-omened ward was in danger again. The Trafican lowered a boat in which Wag Benton and eight stout sailors rowed away toward the American for information and help. The night was so dark that the boatmen did not see a dark ship at their bow until they were hailed in Spanish, and a small search light turned upon them. Unheeding the challenge they darted away amid a shower of balls from the watch on their old enemy, the Spanish cruiser. The Americans heard the firing and sent out a boat to enquire the cause. They were informed that a strange boat had boldly approached the Spaniard, disregarded the challenge, and disappeared in the darkness.

The excited Spaniards weighed anchor and cruised about in the darkness. The apprehensive Americans kept alongside of them as near as prudence allowed. It was broad daylight when both vessels rounded a point of the island and sighted the fated slaver, only needing another hour of rising tide to free her from her coral prison. Then began another sea race over a ten knot course, and the Spaniard won. She had the position nearest the slaver at the start, and adroitly kept between the American and the prize.

As soon as the Trafican was afloat both men-of-war convoyed her into Broa bay, where the slaves were delivered to the Spanish authorities of Cuba, and the crew imprisoned in an old barrack, under guard of the men from the Spanish ship.

The captain of the Spaniard picked out Wag Benton, Captain Rexton, the mate, the boatswain, and four others, as the ringleaders, and sent them to Moro castle at Havana. The American and British consuls sent formal demands that the prisoners be sent to their respective countries for trial, for the Captain, mate, and boatswain, were Englishmen and the others were citizens of the United States. The Spanish blood was boiling at the revengeful degree, and the Captain General was personally disposed to gratify the Spaniards' thirst for blood atonement. Consequently a long diplomatic correspondence ensued without any agreement being reached, until events at Broa bay lifted the Captain General's pen from his evasive letters to the consuls, and put it down upon a positive order for the immediate execution of the slaver pirates at Moro castle.

The Spanish cruiser at Broa bay was short on supplies, so the American captain proposed to feed the prisoners until the ship's commissary department could be replenished. This offer was gladly accepted, and the blue jackets were allowed to take cooked rations into the stockade three times a day. Every time an American entered the prison he wore in addition to a very innocent look, an extra suit of clothes, which he shed in the barrack room to be put on by a black-birder, who, with a share of the mess plates, walked out between the Spanish guards and on board of the American, where he was enrolled on a false list a member of the crew. In this way a dozen escaped in a day. The very audacity of the act averted suspicion, and yet something must be done to cover up the treachery when it was discovered that the prisoners had escaped. This was done by starting a short tunnel under the floor of a barrack room and undermining the stockade, but not breaking open the outer end until the night that the last black-birder, masquerading as a blue jacket, had taken his supper mess plates and walked leisurely out of the prison, which had never been inspected by the officers in charge of the guards.

The alarm raised by the innocent looking sailors who brought the breakfast to the barrack the next morning, was the first intimation that the unwary Spaniards had that they were guarding a deserted prison. The open tunnel satisfied them as to the route that had been taken, and searching parties were sent out to scour the country for the identical men, who, dressed as American sailors, encouraged the pursuit. As no trace of the slave thieves could be found, a strong suspicion arose in the minds of the humiliated Spaniards, that the sly Americans had in some way abetted the crawl out. Yet the Americans had been so kind to them in their distresses, so ready to help them bring in the prize, and so generous in furnishing rations for the captives, that their native Castilian courtesy forbade coining their distrust into circulating words.

Outside of the crew of the Spaniard the indignation knew no bounds, and like an angry wave it gathered strength as it rolled

onward to Havana, where it culminated in the arbitrary order of the furious Captain-General.

The British consul ran over to the American consulate to find that the American had gone to Broa bay. He then rushed out to Moro castle and leaped from his carriage just as the firing squad had shot down a group of four Americans, and were reloading for the other group that consisted of the Captain, mate, boatswain, and Benton. The soldiers were priming their pieces when the undaunted Englishman with the British Union Jack in his hand, broke through the guard line and thrusting himself between the leveled muskets and the victims of a drum head court-martial, demanded in the name of Great Britain and humanity that the executioners withhold their bloody hands. This appeal, echoed back as they well knew it would be from the throne of England, cooled the Spanish blood, and they surrendered the prisoners to the Consul, who claimed Wag Benton as a British subject. The men were put on board of an English cruiser that was about to sail for home, and in less than a week it saluted Moro castle and put to sea.

While Wag Benton was happy to escape a Spanish bullet, yet he was loth to have an English court discover that he was an American, and be sent home for trial where stealing and importing slaves was a piracy punishable by death. He therefore set his head, which was ever fruitful in resources for self-preservation, to devising means of escape from his new imprisonment. Although he was allowed the liberty of the deck, yet the marines and sailors were very vigilant, so that he could never turn around without two or more eyes upon him. It seemed that all hands knew that he was the reckless leader of the daring exploit, and might take desperate chances for freedom, which he certainly contemplated, for he was more concerned about his fate than were his companions. They were Englishmen and had no fear of capital punishment.

The ship was coasting along about three miles from the Cuban shore between Matanzas and Cardenas, when Wag Benton determined to make a break for liberty if he found only the freedom of an ocean grave. Just before the ship's lanterns were lighted he sneaked into the quartermaster's room and hid two empty canteens under his jacket. He whispered to his companions to look out for something sensational after dark, and they made their way to the land side of the vessel, and were watching the phosphorescent display in her wake, when Wag Benton sprang upon the rail and dived headlong into the sea. A half dozen mariners rushed to the gunwale and fired at him as he rose in the glittering trail of the ship. He uttered a piercing shriek and sank from sight. The case was reported to the captain of the vessel who said,—

"Sail on, for he 's gone to Davy Jones's locker."

And thus it came to pass that while the crew were admiring his courageous dash for liberty, and his late companions in peril were regretting his tragic end, Wag Benton was leisurely paddling toward a light on the shore about three miles away, safely buoyed up by the canteens under his jacket.

He landed a short distance from the light and cautiously approached it, to find that it was the camp fire of a lone Cuban fisherman, whose boat was well stocked with provisions. Armed with a stout club, Benton advanced boldly upon the timid fisherman, and in Spanish jargon that was more forcible than grammatical, ordered him to fill a ten-gallon keg with fresh water and put it in the boat, following him closely all the time with the club drawn over his head. Standing in the bow of the boat with his threatening club over the enslaved Cuban, Wag Benton made him push the boat as far out from shore as he could wade. Commanding him to stand there until the boat was out of sight, Benton seized the oars and was again a free buccaneer afloat at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico on a life-saving expedition of his own.

Had he not been in the route of the vessels from Havana to England and in the latitude where terrible hurricanes sweep the summer seas, Wag Benton would have had no fears for his personal safety.

He was an experienced sailor and knew where was and what he was about. So he pointed his bow toward the North star, hoisted his sail, and drifted before a light breeze toward the Florida keys. He worked three holes in the bottom of his boat which he closed with plugs. These he removed whenever a ship was sighted, and let the boat fill with water until it was almost submerged. Lying in the water with only his

head above the surface, he scrutinized the vessel. If it did not fly the American flag he let it pass without hoisting a signal of distress. When the suspected enemy had passed, he bailed out the boat, spread his sail, and continued his solitary voyage. At the end of the third day the wind shifted to the northeast, and as his boat was not built for tacking, he was driven far into the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, where he hoped to be picked up by some Gulf and Atlantic coastwise steamer. The vessel that he looked for never came, but in its stead two steamers from the southeast in close company bore down upon him on the morning of the tenth day of his dubious voyage.

While he was justly alarmed over the prospect of being picked up by a vessel whose colors he could not make out, yet there was no use in trying to escape from the leading steamer; for it was heading directly for him. To submerge his boat would only increase the danger of its being run down. There was no escaping this vessel, friend or foe, so he boldly displayed his distress signal, and as the ship heaved to he saw that it was an American man-of-war. Benton's sigh of relief was followed by a wild cheer from the ship as the mate lowered his glass and spoke to the men who crowded the gunwale. It was like raising the coffined dead from the grave to the surprised sailors, when Wag Benton and his boat were hoisted upon deck of his old guardian ship, which had so faithfully maintained her "honor among thieves." The report had reached Broa bay that Wag was one of the four men who were shot at Moro castle. The story of his escape from the Englishman was almost incredible, even to the reckless men who were familiar with perilous adventures.

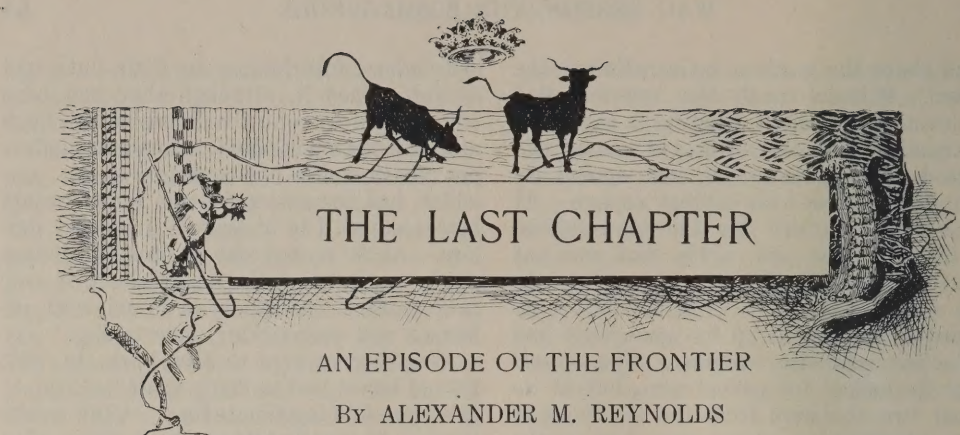
The other vessel was the Trafican manned by her old black-birding crew. The Spaniards when they knew that the ship had been a pest hospital, looked upon it as a Jonah, and sold it to the American captain for a trifle of its value. It was taken to New Orleans, where it was disinfected and sold for a handsome advance above the purchase price. The money was divided among the crew whose faithfulness to their duty had so well earned it, although they had been engaged in a contraband business. Each man had been promised a hundred dollars per month, and a choice negro as his pay, which, had the enterprise not failed, would have amounted to at least a thousand dollars. As it turned out a hundred dollars apiece was all that they realized out of over four months' time spent in an unlawful, inhuman, and neck-risking undertaking.

Wag Benton went to New York, to visit his old home, and to start again in life, — this time in a legitimate line. A few weeks later as he was watching the landing of a Liverpool steamer, there was a mutual surprise when the Trafican's captain, mate, and boatswain, walked down the stage plank. They were almost astounded to see Benton, and at once ceased lamenting his barnacled bones at the bottom of the sea.

It is a very easy thing to send a prisoner several thousand miles away from the place of his arrest for trial. It is a more difficult matter to send convincing proof of his guilt along with him. Under such circumstances it is not difficult for the accused to apply for a writ of *habeas corpus* and demand an immediate trial, and in default of prosecuting evidence, to be discharged by the court from custody.

As the captain, mate, and boatswain, were leaving the London court room, they were met by a clerk of the American Legation, who presented them with their portion of the proceeds of the sale of the Trafican, sent from New Orleans. The following day they were again afloat upon the Atlantic under the American flag. Standing beneath the stars and stripes that waved over a legitimate deck, they swore by Neptune, the god of the sea, that they would henceforth employ the business methods of honorable men. And they ever afterwards kept their oath.

The American captain was never detected as an abetter of the black-birding expedition, but never again was treacherous to an official trust. And as if to atone for his faithlessness, he, with many of the slaver's crew went down to a seaman's grave in a famous naval battle of the civil war.



THE LAST CHAPTER

AN EPISODE OF THE FRONTIER

By ALEXANDER M. REYNOLDS

THE semi-civilized garb of the cow-boy could not hide the fact that he was an aristocrat. His hands, begrimed and withered by scorching blasts of desert winds, yet preserved their elegance, and when the loose collar of his flannel shirt slipped from his sun-tanned neck, it revealed a skin as white and fine as a woman's.

Two years before the end came, he had ridden to the door of the ranch and asked for work. The foreman had looked contemptuously at the blistered face, which was receiving its first lessons from the sun, but the would-be puncher bore the scrutiny unflinchingly, and Wild Dick "lowed" to himself that "thar might be grit in the feller if he warn't so green," and bade him, "Light, anyway, and come into supper."

His outfit was magnificent,— purchased with the last of a great fortune recklessly squandered, and though everything conformed strictly to the demands of the country, from the silver-banded sombrero to the gold-chased Mexican spurs, there was a painful newness about it all. The saddle creaked uneasily as he swung himself to the ground, the "chaps" were pure and spotless in their cleanliness, and the ivory-handled six-shooter, with its untarnished barrel, did not give evidence of having participated in much slaughter. But there was "grit" in his face as Wild Dick had "lowed," —a handsome, almost beautiful face—the face of that pleasure-loving race which a hundred years before had danced to the very brink of the volcano and then gone with their king to the scaffold, smiling contemptuously at the fury of Parisian mobs and jesting with their executioners.

For the first few months the life of Maurice (the boys called him "Morry") was not an easy one. He was a good rider, but be a man never so good a horseman, his first experiences with broncos are apt to prove disastrous, and more than one bruise and sprain were the cost of experience. Then he had to submit to the inevitable rounds of "breaking in," as it was called. One night he would be sewn up in his blankets, the next a "kangaroo court" would be improvised in which he played the part of prisoner *pro tem*, and was the butt of many a rude jest. It was all in fun, however, that the boys played their school-boy pranks on the inexperience of the novice, and he took it as such, laughing as loudly as any at jokes that were often not pleasant.

It did not take him long to become a cowboy in every sense of the word,— naturally, he who had been the wildest, gayest, of all the gilded youth of the fastest capital in the world, became the most devil-may-care, the most reckless, of all that band of free lances. If there was any particularly wild bronco to be subjugated, Morry was the one to do it. Was there an unruly steer to be branded? — the gaudy foreigner was the first to dash at the vicious brute. In their periodic descents upon the little frontier town, none kept up the lawless revelry with more reckless abandon than did this scion of nobility. He was a thorough comrade, meeting all the vicissitudes and participating in the pleasures of his companions, but sharing his confidence with none.

Between Wild Dick and Morry arose a real friendship, a communistic fellowship such as knits together the hearts of two brave men, however different their stations in life. A few months after his arrival, the

"Opened a Lane in the Midst of the Horned Death"

two had been caught in front of a stampede and were obliged to fly neck and neck for their lives before the rushing herd of crazed cattle. They were making their way well out of danger, when Dick's horse stumbled in a prairie dog burrow and came down with a broken leg. Without a moment's hesitation, his companion sprang to the ground, and standing over the prostrate man, emptied his revolver into the dense ranks of advancing cattle. It was a piece of bravery that was almost ridiculous in its recklessness; one who has not seen a stampede can form no idea of the passing courage of such a deed; but as sometimes happens, the forlorn chance won, and that compact mass of panic-stricken beasts parted on either side of the desperate pair and opened a lane in the midst of the horned Death.

"What the h—— made you get off your horse?" asked Dick, as he sprang to his feet and gazed after the herd, already vanishing in a cloud of dust. But there was in the clasp of his hand that which told of a gratitude that, if need be, would risk in return, life for life. So the two became

"pardners"— a term unknown save in the West, but one that signifies much; a tacit bond, unguarded by aught save friendship, but which is often stronger than all the oath-bound brotherhoods of secret societies. It was a new departure to see Dick advising caution to his pardner,—Dick, the most reckless man of all the frontier, but as that worthy said, "It 'peared to him that Morry tried every way in the world to get killed; he did n't know nothin' and so he war n't afraid o' nothin'."

And it certainly did look very much that way. When, a year or so before, Maurice had at last come to the conclusion, forced upon him by circumstances, that a fortune, however great, must finally succumb to the demands made upon it by hundred per cent loans, he had asked the head of his house — a great name, known throughout Europe — what he must do.

"Marry an American girl," suggested that personage.

But marriage was not in the gay Parisian's line.

"Then go somewhere and get killed."

Maurice had apparently chosen the latter alternative.

As the months merged into years and his life became not an experiment or caprice, but a settled fact, he almost ceased to have the ambitions or longings that had beset him at first. Here, away from civilization and refinement, apart from the society of of men and women of his own class, he often looked back with feelings of contempt upon the old life, that had passed as a dream. And yet, with all, he preserved his individuality, and an acquaintance of the times more prosperous would have recognized in the cow-boy, the same generous, courteous, pleasure-loving Maurice of the Saint Germain,— the *noblesse oblige* was as strong in the heart that beat beneath the rough flannel shirt, as it had been under the broadcloth.

One spring it was said that the ranch was to change hands. The owner sent word to the foreman to round the cattle in from the great territory over which they had strayed and hold them in one vast herd, to be inspected by the prospective purchaser. For a month there was hard riding, and then one by one the different parties into which the outfit had separated came in, driving each their restless drove of semi-wild beasts. It was a goodly herd, when all were together, stretching in loose array almost as far as the eye could see, and like some great wind-driven cloud, ever changing shape as each restless beast strove to regain its accustomed range.

The three stalwart young Englishmen for whom all this show had been prepared, from a vantage point on a swell of the prairie, took the sight in at a glance and had their ranching fever received a check from the somewhat rough experiences of the past ten days, the scene before them was quite enough to rekindle their enthusiasm. Accompanied by the cow-man, they rode slowly around the vast herd. It was all that had been claimed, composed of sleek beasts, with great broad horns and fierce, wild eyes that gazed with wonder at the, then, rare sight on those prairies — man — a herd of such animals as one only saw in the good old days of free range, when no aggravating wires fenced the limitless plains or stayed the wanderings of the restless herds. That time has now gone. The almost feudal rule of the "cattle barons" — as they were called — is drawing to a close and the cowboys together with their wild charges will soon be things of the past. But it was a goodly time, the remembrance of which must ever quicken the pulses of those who saw it.

The trade was made, and he who at peril of life had wrested the lands from the hands of the Indians and nursed the insignificant bunch of cows through the thousand dangers, as little by little they increased to the present great band, signed with his almost unreadable signature the paper that turned the whole over to the new owners.

A few days later the branding began. In small bands the cattle were driven into the corral and branded with the mark that claimed them for the English syndicate. It was hard, rough, dangerous, yet exhilarating work; a fight of man against beast, brute force against human strength.

As usual, Morry threw himself into the pen with characteristic energy,— toiling, sweating, swearing, and yelling, as wildly as the wildest of the crew,— now circling his coiling lariat around the horns of some great steer and stopping a charge that threatened a comrade,— then dodging an infuriated rush that meant destruction to himself.

The accident came at last — as it too often did, in those days. An unusually wild bunch of steers had been driven up, and in spite of desperate fighting had all been marked, except one great fellow, which stood in a corner, head down, pawing the ground and breathing his defiance in quick, short snorts from his distended nostrils until the dust rose in clouds. The men were all on foot and Dick with a warning shout threw his rope. The noose settled well over the two branching horns, and with a bellow of rage the sullen brute charged at Morry, who was standing on the other side of the corral, and depending on the rope which Dick had hitched to the snubbing post immediately after the cast, was careless of danger. There was a creaking sound as the tough raw-hide cut its way into the mesquite wood of the post and then, with a snap, it broke. A horrible sight followed. The unrestrained beast bore the cow-boy senseless to the dust and like a demon of vengeance gored and crushed the prostrate flesh, until shot after shot from the six-shooters, forced life from a dozen bullet wounds, and stretched the brute, dead, across the body of its victim.

Carefully from beneath the great carcass we drew the poor, wounded body of our comrade and tenderly carried him, dying, to the ranch house.

Death came an hour later, not to a senseless body, but to one who consciously faced and silently met him as bravely as his ancestors had done on more glorious fields in the days of old.

After all was over, a little gold locket, bloodstained and battered, was taken from the crushed breast, and one of the new English ranch men, stepping to the one window of the gloomy room, read by the dying light the inscription it bore, and then with a gasp of surprise turned wonderingly to the body lying in its blood.

"Did you happen to know of him?" softly asked Wild Dick.

"Know of him!" was the reply. "Who in all Europe did not!"

MOONRISE

WHEN thinly gleams the bladed edge of light
The guardian year sheathes in the closing west,
O soft the step of dewy-sandaled night,
And sweet the throbbing of her jeweled breast!

Lo! siren-like in twilight's purple gloom,
The heaven-gazing billows of the sea
Like visions rise, from out the drowning tomb
Of past, with ghost-white faces come to be.

The stealthy water's silver-armored band
Of breakers climb the bowlder-bankment o'er
Where, like a sleeping city, solemn stand
The spiry crags along the quiet shore.

Slow from the bosom of the outer wave,
Like a sweet memory of the brighter ray,
Floating in silence o'er the deep, dark grave,
Comes the lone spirit of the buried day.

Ernest Malcolm Shipley.

ONE OF GRANDMOTHER'S STORIES

When I was a girl I used to go
Deep in the woods where the blackberries grow
Big and black and full of juice,
Mary and I, with our sunbonnets loose,
Our homespun dresses and pails of wood -
Oh, but didn't the days seem good!
Start when the dawn was dappled still
And the sun looked straight at the western hill,
With the birds all singing, the dew on the grass,
And none so gay as the ten-year-old lass.
In the cool green shade where the moss was deep,
A spring ran out with a gurgling leap,
And there was our lunch of mother's bread
And blackberries growing right over our head!
There all day we two girls stayed
And filled our pails till each one weighed
Too much to be carried by one small maid.
Then we cut a stick from a straight young tree
And swung the pails between Mary and me.
Off we ran down the long hillside,
Swinging our bonnets with strings untied,
With fingers stained and aprons, too,

Tired and hungry all through and through.
What great brown bowls of milk and bread
Mother had waiting, and then - to bed.
To think it was eighty years ago
And Mary's dead, and I, no! no!
This is not I in this big armchair,
I'm racing still in the sunset there.

HERBERT · CROMBIE · HOWE